

Student Name:

Date:

## DREAMS FROM MY FATHER A FREE VERSE POEM WRITING PROJECT



For this writing project, you will complete a FREE VERSE POEM about Dreams from My Father. It is worth 25 points.

- It should focus on a character from the book and be written from Obama's point of view.
- It should include descriptive language about plot and setting.
- It should use similes, metaphors, repetition and a symbol.
- It should include **at least 5** sensory details.
- It should explore the theme of IDENTITY and relate to the lessons that are learned by reading the memoir.
- It must use **at least 2-3 QUOTES** from the memoir and be **at least 15 LINES IN LENGTH**.

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Here are important things to remember about free verse poetry:

- It does NOT rhyme
- It is often called open form poetry,
- It is unstructured and is not governed by rules of rhythm, specific syllable count, or stanza.
- It will have varied line breaks (this means that it will look uneven because each line will have a different number of words in it)

Here is a sample of a free verse poem that accomplishes the objectives of this assignment from Jem's point of view. It is based on To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee.

#### Long Walk Home

"An old town... a tired old town" (Lee 5).

With a haunting neighborhood phantom named Boo.

Seems out of place in a polite southern town

Where crickets chirp like creaking violins

And freshly washed clothes dry in the bright sun on a line across the yard

And fireflies light up the dark with a warm yellow glow

To shine a path on the long walk home.

My image of a sleepy, peaceful town was torn apart

Like a band-aid removed too early that exposes a fragile weeping wound.

By the conflict between racism and the acid, painful truth

"Boo Radley was the least of our fears" (Lee 243).

It didn't matter that Tom Robinson had never harmed a soul

It didn't matter that "the state has not produced one iota of medical evidence" (Lee 203).

It didn't matter that my father, Atticus, risked our family's pride to save Tom's life.

It's a sin to kill a Mockingbird, but that didn't stop the town

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From shattering the beauty of my crystalline childhood,  
From standing together like a picket fence to block the way of others,  
From finding him guilty, and shooting poor Tom Robinson down.

Watching from my stiff bench in court, I saw my father  
Was no broken man, too old to play football.  
But strong enough not to give in and join the town.  
I saw a bubbling darkness hidden beneath the sweet peach cobbler and talcum powder.  
That had covered his childhood home like soft creeping moss on a Magnolia tree.  
No, it wasn't some bogeyman, who haunted his dreams any more.  
I knew "[w]hy Boo Radley's stayed shut up in the house all this time.  
It's because he wants to stay inside" (Lee 227).

Childhood games in the yard, dolls made of soap  
All left behind like worn out hand-me-downs.  
My arm was broken, cracked in two like splintered wood  
But my mind was now an open book.  
On its wrinkled pages was my father's message:  
"You never really understand a person ...  
Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it" (Lee 30).  
It had been a long and bitter walk home  
With only the moonlight to shine the way.

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## Poetry Planning Guide for the Free Verse Poem

Before you write your poem, use the chart below to help you brainstorm. The brainstorming will be collected and graded as part of the final project.

- 1) Identify passages or phrases from the book that are helpful for your quotes WITH PAGE NUMBERS.

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2). Consider the types of figurative language that you will use as poetry techniques. These should be used to advance or refine the central theme of your poem.

Poetry Technique	Examples from the book or language that you create
Simile	
Metaphor	
Symbol	
Repetition	

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Free Verse Poem Rubric

	Excellent	Strong	Average	Weak
<b>SETTING AND CHARACTER DETAIL</b> You use accurate adjectives to help describe the setting and characters in great detail, making it clear where the poem takes place and helping the reader to visualize the characters.	You include at least three descriptive adjectives and three vivid verbs to describe the setting and the character  5	You include at least two descriptive adjectives to describe the setting and the character  4	You include 1 descriptive adjective and one vivid verb to describe setting and 1 of each to describe character.  3.5	You are missing either character or setting descriptions.  2
<b>FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE</b> Your poem uses <b>TWO</b> similes, <b>TWO</b> metaphors, effective <b>repetition</b> and <b>ONE</b> symbol to help advance a central theme.	You use 2 similes, 2 metaphors, and at least 1 symbol that relates to the book's theme  5	You use 2 similes, 2 metaphors, but don't have a clear symbol that relates to the theme  4	You have 1 or 2 similes and metaphors and your symbol is unclear.  3.5	You are missing similes or metaphors and the symbol is unclear.  2
<b>SENSORY DETAIL</b> Your poem uses <b>FIVE sensory</b> words or phrases involving sound, sight, touch, smell, or taste, to bring the poem to life.	You include all five senses  5	You include four senses  4	You include 3 senses  3.5	You include 2 senses  2
<b>TEXTUAL EXAMPLES</b> You include <b>2-3 QUOTES</b> from the text. Your quotes are either narration or actual quotes or "key phrases" that are in ORIGINAL LANGUAGE and you cite them accurately.	You include 3 key quotes and cite them accurately.  5	You include 2 key quotes and cite them accurately.  4	You include 1 key quote and cite it accurately.  3.5	You include no quotes.  2
<b>GRAMMAR/MECHANICS</b> You have written at least 15 lines. The punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling are suitable to the poem's form and content.	You have at least 15 lines and no errors.  5	You have 12-15 lines and 1-2 errors.  4	You have 10-12 lines and 3-4 errors  3.5	You have 8-10 lines and 5 or more errors.  2

Total points =     /25 points   Bonus: Extra Credit for a Thematic Title:     / 1 point

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